

Design Resource

Jakhoi and Khaloi

The Craft of Utensils

by

Asst. Prof. Keyur Sorathia and Tanima Das

DoD, IIT Guwahati

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/jakhoi-and-khaloi>



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Introduction

Assam has an agrarian economy. Most of the activities of the people are deeply connected to the fields. As such bamboo has always been an intrinsic part of Assam's socio-economic structure. Available in abundance, this species of grass has been used by the people of the region in innumerable ways. From being used for building homes, bridges, household products and even fancy decorative items, bamboo forms an integral part of the everyday living of the local community.

Let us study the craft of bamboo as practised by trained craftsmen of the northeast region. In this module, we will look at Bamboo craft, with special emphasis on its practice amongst the craft cluster in the two towns of Assam - Barpeta and Nalbari. We examine in detail the making of two traditional household products commonly used by the local community, the Khaloi and the Jakhoi.



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Different Kinds of Bamboo

Assam is rich in its forest resources. It is well known for its diverse variety of bamboo and cane species. The agro-climatic condition of the state and the abundance of bamboo in the forest make it a major source of raw material. It forms an integral part of the lifestyle and economy of Assam.

The forests of Mizo Hills, Cachar, Mikir and North Cachar Hills, Nowgong and Lakhimpur districts are rich in bamboo such as

- Muli (Melocannabambusoides)
- Dalu (Teinostachyumdalloa)
- Khang (Dendrocalmuslongispatnus)
- Kaligoda (Oxytenantheranigrociliata)
- Pecha (Dendrocalamus Hamilton) to name a few.

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Research Areas



Nalbari



Barpeta

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Nalbari

Nalbari

Bounded by the foothills of Bhutan in the north, Brahmaputra river in the south, Darrang and Kamrup districts in the east and Barpeta district in the west, Nalbari is an ideal town in terms of culture and tradition.

Bamboo Craft of Nalbari

Despite the apparent influence of various cultures and increased dependency on modern technology, the town still has a strong connection with nature and resorts to the use of natural materials like bamboo for the preparation of various crafts.

From the busy marketplace in the city to the paddy fields in the outskirts of the town, the use and applicability of bamboo are very much evident. Huge grain storing bamboo baskets, net for catching fish, sievewall hanging and even intricate jewellery is made with this amazing variety of grass. However, most of these bamboo, crafts are used for their days without much interest by the local people to sell them for commercial purposes.



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Barpeta

About Barpeta

Barpeta is Located about 90 kilometers (56 mi) northwest of Guwahati and is known as the “Land of the Satras”.

It was in Barpeta that the great Assamese reformer, Saint, Scholar and Cultural exponent Srimanta Sankardeva and his able disciple Shri Shri Madhabdeva, who arrived from Upper Assam back in the 16th century lay down a strong foundation of Assamese Culture in the region through his socio-religious Vaishnava-reform movement.

Bamboo Craft of Barpeta

Barpeta is also renowned for its bamboo crafts. Skilled crafts clusters dotted across the region are well known for transforming the fibrous bamboo into beautiful woven baskets, accessories, utility products as well as souvenirs. Products include fishing nets, baskets, sieves, large grain storing vessels are all made from bamboo.

With the support of the state, special efforts have been taken by the craftsmen to establish a market to sell bamboo products. It is also remarkable is see that the traditional market, which was always used by the local people to make items for an agricultural or domestic purpose has now modernised. Bamboo products are being moulded through technology intervention to make products that find buyers in both the national and international markets.

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Khaloi

Introduction

Khaloi is one of the most commonly used fishing accessories in Assam. It is also called Kanyamur in the local language, as its form resembles the shape of a female waist. It is a small conical shaped pitcher woven from strips of the local species of bamboo called 'Bijuli'. It is mostly used by the locals to keep fish during hand-net fishing.



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Making of the Khaloi

Bijuli is a species of bamboo suited for weaving, because of its flexibility. It can be split easily and sized to fine strips. First, the outer dark green sheath of the bamboo is removed. The inner layer is further split to 1 mm thick using a cutting knife called the 'Dao'. These are suitably sized to lengths 30 cm each.

Making the Base

A flat base is needed for the Khaloi to stand upright. To commence with, the strips are interwoven and suitably bent to create a square base. As we keep on introducing additional warps to the square, base a circular shape is formed.

Weaving the Body

We now have to form the hollow for the body of the pitcher. This is done by inserting a strong jute string into the base, the other ends of which are tied and held round the craftsmen's knee.

With a tug of the string held tight, help to curve the base forward. As we continue with the weaving process from the base upwards, the base takes a curvy bend with the pressure applied from the feet. New warps are introduced in such a manner that the base is wider than the neck.

Water is sprinkled from time to time on the pitcher to make the strips supple and easy to mould. The weaving is continued, adding new warps in such a way that the circumference of the circle is gradually reduced till the body of the pitcher takes shape and we reach the neck portion.

Weaving the Neck

To form the narrow neck of the pitcher a metal bowl is held tight at the open end to act as a preform.

Now, a few strips from the body of the pitcher are used to tie the bowl and fix it in position.

The bamboo strips are woven around this preform and the narrow neck of the pitcher is woven. The preform is now removed.

Locking the Rims

After the completion of the narrow neck, the loose ends of the warps are again split into two to add more flexibil-

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ity in forming the mouth during the weaving process. Once the mouth of the pitcher is formed, the ends of the warp are now uniformly cut.

A 2mm thick bamboo strip is introduced around the mouth of the pitcher. This acts as reinforcement for the rim making it stronger.

The loose ends of the weft are now folded over one after the other around the bamboo strip and simultaneously tied using a strong cane strip. Once we tie the bent strips to the circular frame, the loose ends are tucked inside the pitcher to finish the mouth of the pitcher.



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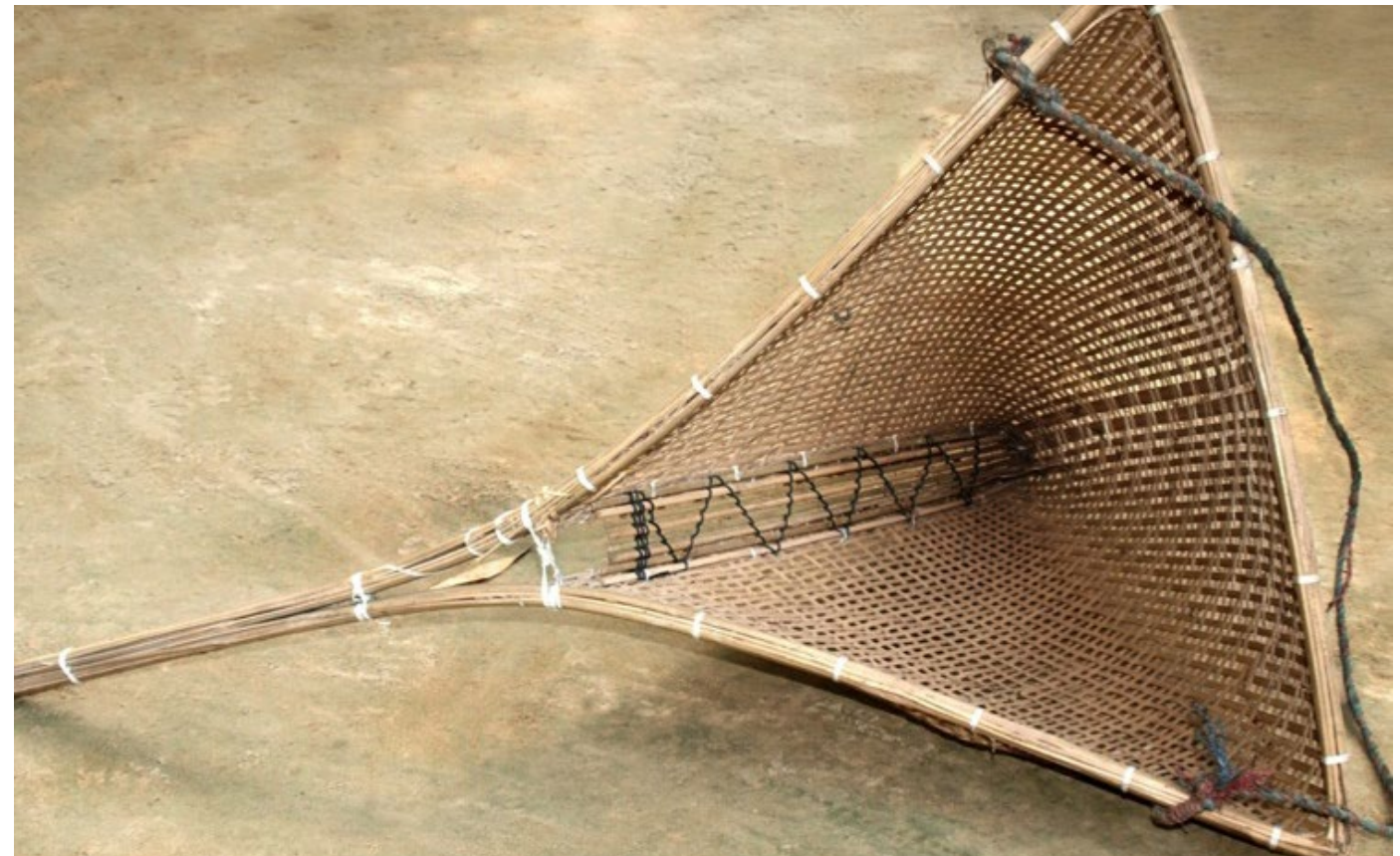
Jakhoi

Introduction

The Jakhoi is an ingenious adaptation for a fishing trap developed by the locals. It is more like a wickerwork shovel made of bamboo and used to catch small fish, either by dragging it along or placing it on water.

Generally, fishes tend to hide between weeds; the Jakhoi with its net made of bamboo splits traps these fishes and brings them out of the water. Jakhoi is made of a species of bamboo called the Jati.

Jati is often tall, less prolific and used for handicraft items. The process of making the Jakhoi has been described with the aid of the video.



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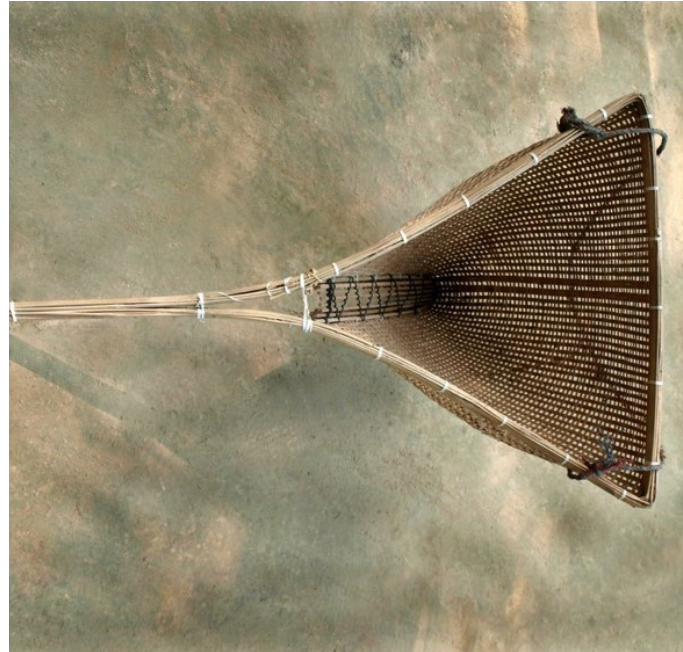
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Preparing the Bamboo Strips

First, the bamboo is cut into a number of pieces. Then we will remove the green sheath of the bamboo to reveal the inner lighter yellow layer. After the bamboo strips are split the fibrous layer is removed. The strips will have a uniform size of 2mm width each.



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Forming the Base or Toli

Now the bamboo strips are placed on the ground to form a base that is called the 'Toli' in the local language. New warps are added and woven in a criss-cross manner leaving small spaces in between. After the required length of the Toli, is achieved, the loose ends of the warps are interlocked to form the shape of the rhombus. We add new warps that are woven into the wefts as well as loose ends of the locked warps towards the end.

After completion of the Toli, the extra ends of the wefts are cut off. For obtaining the triangular shape of the Jakhoi the equality and symmetry of both sides of the curve are measured. Once the base acquires its required shape new warps and wefts are added to the loose ends and eventually tucked into the warp ends.

Here we shall take two alternative warps and two alternative loose ends and entwine them together. The loose end of the wefts is then bent and tucked into the weave. The same process is performed on all four sides. The extra ends are cut off.



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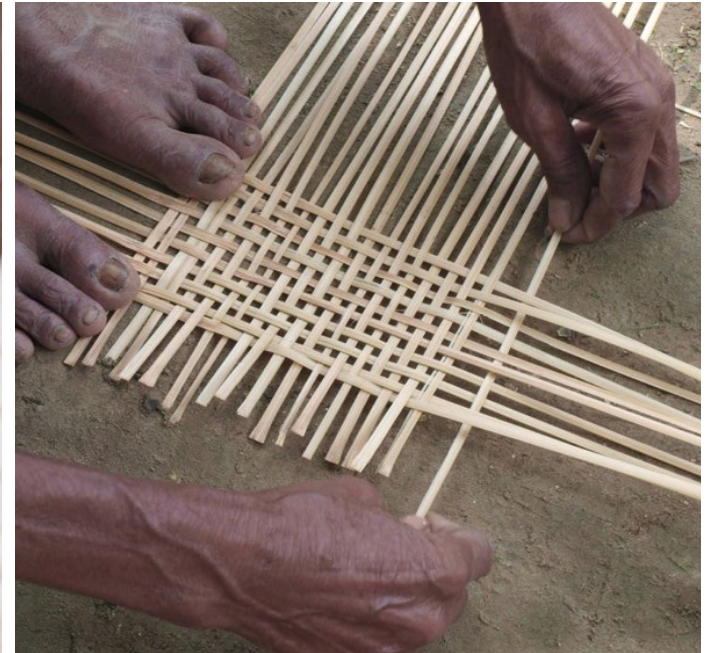
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Attaching the Bao

Just like a shovel needs to have a handle, in the Jakhoi two thick and sturdy bamboo strips act as a handle often called the Bao in the local language. The bamboo strips have to be processed before they are bent. For this purpose, we use the colocasia leaves. The leaves are tied at two points of the bamboo strips, leaving equal space at both ends and then burnt on the fire.

The moisture content in the leaves makes the bamboo points malleable and prevents the bamboo from breaking when the bending takes place. Here, we insert the shorter side of the Toli between them and tie them with thin cane strips. The two corners of the Toli will also be inserted between the bamboo strips by bending slowly and simultaneously tied together with a cane strip.



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Attaching the Mekhela

Once the Jakhoi takes its shape, we introduce a net frame made of bamboo strips called 'Mekhela'.

The Mekhela will be made by small bamboo strips bent at the centre. The bamboo strips are arranged on a flat surface together and tied with a thinner cane strip in a zigzag manner. Once the Mekhela takes its shape, we tie the net frame at the space left by the bending of the Toil.

The Mekhela generally acts as a kind of trap for the fish when the Jakhoi is dragged inside the water.



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Forming the Frame

After completion of the Jakhoi thin bamboo strips will be tied to the sides of the Bao by cane strips. This frame adds strength to the 'Jakoi' and also gives the final touches to this fishing equipment. Once the Jakhoi is formed the extra ends of the Bao is cut off. Finally, a rope will be introduced the ends of which will be tied at either side of the Jakhoi.

The rope enables the fisherman to drag the Jakhoi inside shallow water and trap fish.



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Other Bamboo Products

This section will provide a glimpse of other bamboo made products for household as well as commercial usage.



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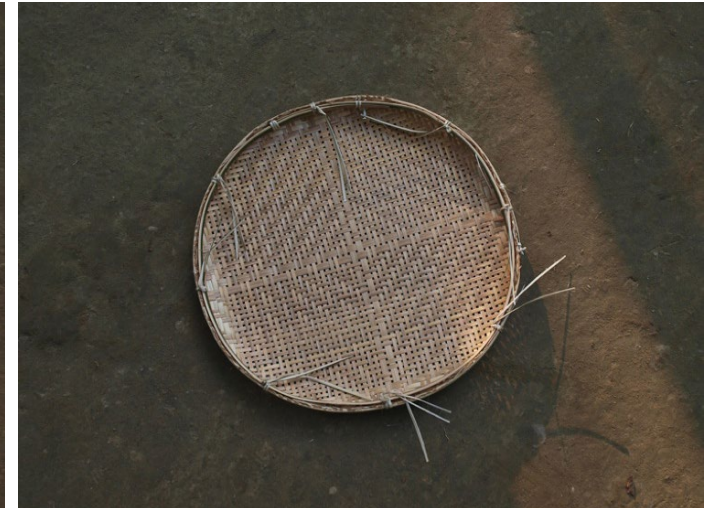
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Video



Bamboo Bangle



Bamboo Earring



Introduction



Making Process of Jakhoi Part 1

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Making Process of Jakhoi Part 2



Making Process of Jakhoi Part 3



Making Process of Jakhoi Part 4



Making Process of Jakhoi Part 5

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Khaloi Making

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